

Healthy eating, active living: Grape, a versatile fruit

By Brittany Lorimer, Community Contributor

Description: Grapes are the oldest known cultivated fruit and are the No. 1 crop in Kern County.

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Blue, green, purple, red. What comes to mind when you think of these colors? It is likely that your first guess would be that they are colors of the rainbow, but in fact they are colors of grapes.

Grapes are the oldest known cultivated fruit and are the No. 1 crop in Kern County. There are over 50 different varieties from table grapes, to wine grapes, to commercial grapes. They are an extremely versatile fruit in that they are produced not only to be eaten raw, but can also be used to make wine, juice, jams, jellies, grape seed oil and raisins. Grapes are a good source of vitamin C and fiber. Darker-colored grapes contain flavonoids, a natural chemical found in plants that act as antioxidants. With the nutrient value and antioxidant power that they

contain, grapes have been shown to promote a healthy heart and to prevent cancer.

Grapes make for a great sweet and juicy treat to pack in your child's lunch in place of cookies or cupcakes. Try them frozen as a snack to cool you down during the summer months or add them to salads for color and flavor. They are low in calories and fat free: 18 grapes are one serving size and provide about 60 calories, 0 grams of fat and 1 gram of fiber.

Since we're talking about grapes as a versatile fruit, what would be a versatile form of physical activity?

One of the most versatile forms of physical activity is running or jogging. Jogging is a term that usually refers to running at a slower pace. Running is so versatile that it is an integral part of many sports from soccer to baseball. Running is a great form of physical activity because it only requires one person, can be done at anytime, anywhere, and is virtually cost free. It is a bone-bearing exercise that may help lower the risk of osteoporosis as it improves heart and lung capacity, and can help with stress relief.

How to get started?

Like any exercise routine, you will want to start with a warm up. Then begin walking at a brisk pace. Begin swinging your arms and gradually break into a slow jog. Make sure you run at a pace that is comfortable for you and at which you can still hold a conversation — a good sign you are not over doing it. Some fitness experts recommend starting out by simply walking for several weeks then alternately combining walking and running. Always consult your doctor before starting any new form of physical activity.

Grab some running shoes, muster a little enthusiasm and take yourself for a jog or a fun run around the block, on the bike path or at the local park!

Here is a recipe that I know you will enjoy. It is colorful like the rainbow, refreshing and can be used as a dessert.

Summer Grape Salad

- 1/2 lb red seedless grapes
- 1/2 lb green seedless grapes
- 1/2 lb black seedless grapes
- 1/2 c chopped celery
- 1/4 c raisins
- 3/4 c chopped pecans; toasted
- 1 tsp butter

Dressing

- 1/4 c reduced fat sour cream
- 1/4 c nonfat plain yogurt
- 1 T honey
- Pinch salt
- Pinch allspice

Mix washed grapes with celery, raisins, pecans and all other ingredients. Dressing can be served on the side or mixed in with the salad. Serve and enjoy. Makes 12 servings.

Nutrition facts: Provides 105 calories, 16 grams carbohydrate, 5 grams of fat and 1.5 grams fiber.

Brittany Lorimer is a registered dietitian. The Healthy eating, active living articles will be published regularly and will feature locally grown crops.

This article was brought to you by Get Moving Kern, a community coalition that was developed to promote wellness of children and adults in Kern County by promoting healthy eating and active living. For more information, visit: www.Getmovingkern.org